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A HERITAGE RECALLED



The Sarcka family in Proctor (left to right, front row) Ann, Louise, Jack, Andy (on mother's lap), Alma and Elena. In the rear: Earle and Wayne Sarcka.

A FINLANDER GROWS UP IN PROCTOR

By Wayne A. Sarcka

Memory begins in Finland, a little country scarcely heard of until her sons repeatedly challenged world supremacy in the Olympic Games. Her athletes, always few and with little or no financial backing, distinguished themselves as runners-up to the world's best. One newspaper amusingly commented that Finns ought to be good runners because they had thousands of miles of open flat roads with no traffic. Finland again roused the sympathy of the world in her heroic defense against brutal invasion by Russia, whose advantage in men and material was 100-1.

Our way-back ancestors, the Turainian race, went through hell and high water to become Finns, Magyars and Turks. Toughened by numberless wars and in the crucible of nature's most formidable tests of climate and terrain, possibly over the Himalayas, they became in the Finnish segment (the only one I know) a highly civilized people, a poised, modest and respected European nation. Finland has more churches and schools per capita than any other nation. With 17 museums and seven universities in a population of some three millions, she has aimed at the best cultural opportunities for her citizens. She has set an example for the entire West in her care, re-education and rehabilitation of handicapped victims of war, of industry and of old age — a leader in concern for human welfare.

My father, a South Finlander, and a highly trained railroad man, had been engaged in building a railway from Helsinki up to its northernmost terminus in a bleak, cold land. There, he met and married my mother. When the railway was completed, they settled in Volkoniemi, just outside Helsinki, where ancient evergreen forest, teeming with game, almost surrounded their home. These forests, incidentally, still blanket Finland and supply a major source of national income, cut into pulp, plywood and innumerable timber products, including the beautiful aalto furniture.

Early Boyhood

The "great I" was born in Finland in 1890, many light years from today. My four-year-old memories are of the briefest. I remember our morning chore of collecting game from traps set the day before, which provided us with delicious meat through most of the year. I clearly recall sitting at my mother's feet, sick with some childish fever, while she taught me the Lutheran catechism, and assuring her that she need not worry any more, because, once we got to America, I would take care of her! My most exciting memory is of the postman's weekly visit in buggy or sleigh, depending on the roads. He would spend the night with us, and talk us to death with news of the small world around us. To him we looked anxiously for news of Father, whether he had escaped the Romanoffs' long fingers, which sought out everyone opposed to the Russian government; whether he had gotten safely to America.

Father's fear of the Romanoffs was well founded. His father, an articulate advocate of freedom and liberal government, was too much for the ever-present Muscovite ears. Decades later, Father told me the story of grandfather, who had been taken by the Russian government, and, like many others before and after, whipped surreptitiously away, probably to the salt mines. Father never heard from him again.

Sudden death threatened all who believed in government by the consent of the governed. The Governor-General of the "Duchy of Finland" (Russia-named) was a cruel despot bent on assimilating or annihilating the Finnish people, who were just more than the Muscovite mind could understand. After we left, he was assassinated by a Finnish student, who sacrificed his life for his country. The Finns had long been a subject people, first for 100 years under Swedish rule, and not too badly treated for a fiercely freedom-loving race. But they were handed over to Russia in reparation after the Thirty Year War. From then on their lot was hard, as land-locked Russia sought access to open waters through Finland and Turkey — a policy which still goes on.

Father's leaving was a deep secret. His plan was to change his name, forge passports to Hamburg and thence to the United States, and to send for his family when he could. Month after month we waited for news, so long that I scarcely could remember him. At last the longed-for letter came. Father was in America, settled in the tiny State of Vermont, which welcomed immigrants with engineering experience for opening up marble veins under the green blanket of the mountains. He was employed as a marble-driller, work familiar to any construction man. With the promise of steady pay, he would soon send us funds to join him. Through the clever assistance of local authorities, we got passports for all five of us, made out in the name of Sarkka, which Father had adopted to replace the old familiar Saarinen, both good Finnish names. My only recollection of the voyage

was the tragedy of losing my cap, which blew out to sea, a sad loss to me. Thus I passed the Statue of Liberty bareheaded and respectful, perhaps the only respectful-appearing immigrant arriving in America. I faintly recall the filth and sea sickness of some of our steerage travelling companions, but don't know how our family fared. I hope we all proved as sea-worthy as I did in subsequent rough crossings. The ocean trip took 26 days.

A New World

My next memory is of arrival at the tiny railroad station in Proctor, Vermont. It was dark, and Father was not there! We huddled, shivering, through cold black hours on the windy platform, for the station was locked at night. With the dawn Father came, to our enormous relief and delight. It seemed Mother's telegram from Ellis Island had not come through clear, and he had already met two trains expecting us. We scarcely knew him, but strangeness soon wore off, as he took us to a Finnish boarding-house, our first American stop.

We were no sooner settled than he called a family conference to explain that on the way from Hamburg a terrible error had been made. There were no typewriters, and long-hand mistakes were frequent. His adopted name of Sarkka had been mis-spelt and all the passports were made out "Sarcka", a name which would not identify us ethnically. He was personally much perturbed and wanted us to help decide whether to correct the spelling legally or let it go. After a great discussion, we decided that since we were in a new country, beginning a new life, the matter of name was unimportant. The fact that we were a family again, safely across the sea in a country of peace and freedom was all that mattered. This proved to be our first family error, for we have each had to explain our ethnic origin innumerable times. However, Sarcka is unique, probably the only such name in the world. Hence a letter addressed simply to Sarcka, U.S....might conceivably reach one of us. Actually, while in the State Legislature, I received a letter from a Pacific Coast relative addressed to "Sarcka, Vermont".

We enjoyed a brief stay at the boarding-house, but Father soon took us to Shangraw, a cluster of houses two miles outside of Proctor and near to his job. Completely rural, it was surrounded by hundreds of acres of meadow and woodland. We were assigned half of a two-family house. The other family was Swedish, with two American-born boys, both older than I, who kindly helped us learn American ways.

My older sister, Ellen, and I promptly registered in the Proctor school, two long miles away. My first teacher was a fine elderly woman, whom I loved at first sight. On our first day, she said to me "Vaino is an impossible name for an American tongue. Why don't you make it Wayne?" "All right," I said. "What about my middle name, Albinus?" "Call it Anthony", she replied. So little Vaino Albinus Saarinen suddenly became Wayne Anthony Sarcka.

Our new home proved a Paradise. As in Finland, our first duty was to supplement the family larder by gathering nature's bounty, lavishly supplied. There were berries of every kind, apples, and fish abounding in the streams. This free harvest surrounding us symbolized the bounty of the New World. We came to know every apple tree, berry patch and trout brook within miles. We learned to store vast quantities of apples and nuts, and to preserve native fruits — the children's contribution to the family table and purse. All summer long we would gather, first strawberries, then raspberries, blackberries and blueberries and carry them to the village to sell to prosperous Yankees. We had a virtual monopoly on the berry patches, knew when they were ripe, and what the yield should be. They carpeted many acres of land which had been deforested by the lumber barons, then burned for pasture by dairy farmers, and later abandoned. These acres were God's gift to an impoverished family.

In President Cleveland's administration, came our first dread experience with what our friends called "The Great Depression". This brought lean years to our family. Unemployment was rife throughout the nation. It was only through utmost frugality, hard work and full family cooperation that we survived. With our family increasing, we were the underprivileged and often went without the meagerest essentials. Our bellies contracted for long periods of time, and we often went hungry.

Food prices were sky high. Bought at the company store, and at company prices, food costs added up, at month's end, to more than Father's earnings. We were always in arrears or perhaps with only pennies among us all to start a new week and meet its needs. There was limitless wood for the stove, but we needed the lasting heat of coal, which the company sometimes sent us free. Our breakfast was often coffee, doughnuts, apple sauce and home-grown potatoes. Porridge and garden vegetables were saved for lunch and supper. Mother made the best doughnuts I have ever eaten, and spent endless night hours filling up the crock in the cellar which we children raided all day long. Her almost black rye bread was the best loaf I have ever eaten, the staff of the Sarcka life — filling, nourishing and delicious with no need of any spreads to improve it.

We became champion berry-pickers. In the trough of that depression, when hunger stalked the entire nation, we intensified our combined efforts to bring in fruits and fish, which saved us children from malnutrition. Our cash crops increased annually as we located more and better berry patches. We had only one troublesome competitor, an Irish widow, who was a legendary berry-picker for miles around. Her Proctor home was completely screened by huge trees, and she was rarely seen. One day, we hiked the half mile to a marvellous raspberry patch along a hillside. As we approached it, we heard awful sounds, half human and half beast, loud enough for a bull of Bashan. We fled in terror, but that night determined to return next day, armed with stout sticks in case of need. Next morning the hideous sounds were there again, but undaunted we made toward the voice which grew in volume alarmingly. Our little Finnish hearts beat wildly, but we were bound to go on. Then the noise lessened and as we reached the field's edge, ready to fight to the death, all was suddenly quiet, as the old hermit made her exit, still unseen. She had tried to scare us off, but we never heard those noises again.

In the fields we ate our fill, but never touched the berries in our pails, which must be kept for cash sale. Our versatile Father did his mightiest to help. His vegetable garden was always a show place, and he worked in it daily until dark. He somehow secured a cobbler's last, and spent evening hours patching our shoes — the largest single item in our budget. He kept saying while at work: "This life is damn hard on footwear."

During these times of dreadful deprivation, Mother really saved our lives. As a girl, she had learned to care for cows, and was an experienced milker. We managed to buy a cow — a huge Holstein, black with a large white V on one side, and hence named Violet. A good part of every year we all had sweet milk to supplement our meagre diet, and delicious homemade butter, churned by little Andy, our youngest. Mother believed in curds and whey and kept a pan setting in the cool cellar. The only bad moments Violet gave us were when we had to take her to the pure-bred bull near by. Father with his enormous strength would lead her, while we young ones, with whips, kept her on course. She fought all the way over and back, against our combined power. Eventually, we traded her for a more docile animal.

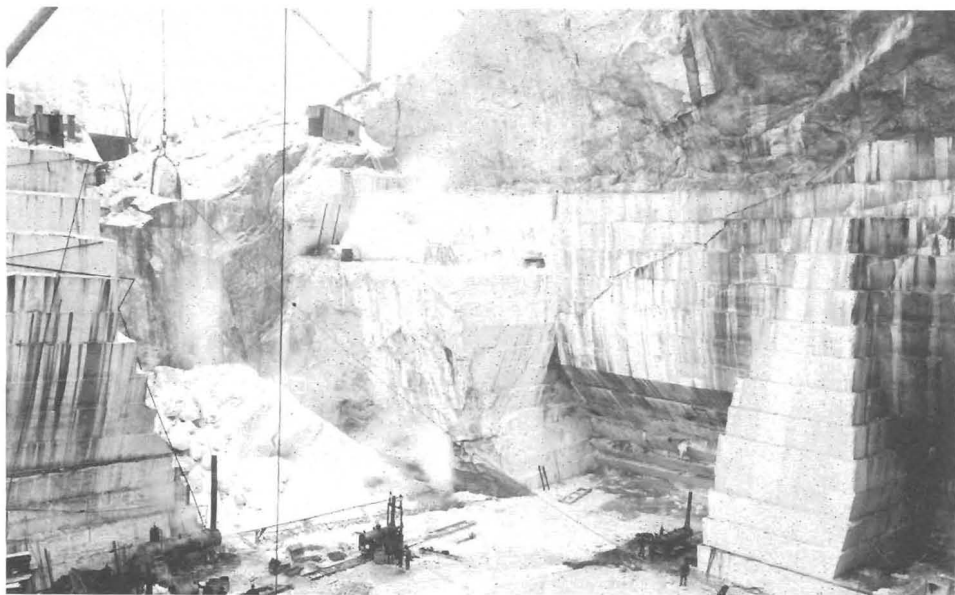
We trudged the two miles to primary school twice daily, and became familiar with almost every rock, tree, ledge and path on the way from Shangraw to Proctor. Winters we ploughed through two feet of snow with temperature often at 20 below zero. The Anderson boys, who went with us, did not believe in keeping circulation going. They would stuff their hands down inside their pants, back and front, while we Sarckas ran, and flayed the air with our arms to keep warm. In school, all of us immigrants were treated with considerable resentment by the old Vermonters, and even by second generation foreigners. One day after school, walking home later than usual, I came upon my brother Earle fighting a pitched battle with one of our tormentors, whose older brother looked on. I moved in to my young brother's defense. The older boy joined in the fracas. We fought until exhaustion overcame us, when, with faces cut and bruised, by mutual consent we went sheepishly home. From then on we were good friends. This episode taught me the value of a foreigner knowing how to use his fists, and I promised Earle that if I ever got the chance I would learn to fight American-style — "boxing". We took to school avidly, eager to become "Americans" as fast as humanly possible, and with our eagerness to learn, we were soon able to speak English.

When eight years old, I walked alone at dawn to the Proctor railway station to see the troop train carrying Vermont regulars and volunteers for the Spanish-American War. The cars were packed with lads, regulars in uniforms, and recruits in mufti. From my mother's stories of the Thirty-Year War, and its hideous sacrifice of young men, I knew that many of these farmer boys would never return to their fields. I cried nearly all the way home.

Another vivid memory is of a day when I went way down in the valley to a brook where I had a favorite secret trout hole. Near the stream stood a little pump-house that supplied water via a great length of iron pipe to the houses on the hill, including our own. I had chosen a cloudy day, which, according to anglers' lore is when fish bite best. Suddenly it began to pour, and I ran for shelter to the pump-house, and rested there, leaning on my hands against the big brass ball such as topped old pumps of that time. I recall a terrific crack, either in my brain or on the pipe line when it was struck by a lightning bolt. When I came to, I was flat on the floor on my back. Had I been leaning on the steel pump itself, instead of only on the brass ball, I would certainly have been killed. It taught me that a pump-house is poor shelter in an electric storm.

Our two-story cottage contained six rooms and a cellar. On the first floor was a large living-room and a generous kitchen. Upstairs were four bedrooms. The kitchen stove supplied our only heat, which scarcely penetrated to the second floor, where we children shivered through many a night, despite beds piled high with homemade quilts and mattresses, mostly hay-stuffed. Mornings, we scurried to the kitchen to dress by the stove. Fortunately, we had a splendid supply of good drinking water from a spring piped to the kitchen sink. A two-seater outdoor privy completed the plumbing except for a huge tin wash tub where Mother scrubbed each of us, in order of age, on Saturday nights in front of the stove. Ours was just above a shanty existence, but our parents sacrificed everything to make it livable.

Father's work was in a nearby quarry, which employed about a dozen men, Swedes, Poles, Czechs and Hungarians, in drilling huge blocks of marble and loading them by derrick on to flatcars above the quarry edge. My first job, aged eight, was won purely by my seriousness. Our Swedish boys were put-out at not getting the job, which paid 50 cents a day. It was a responsible task for an eight-year old. I sat in a small hut at the quarry's rim, looking down nearly 100 feet as



At age eight, I sat in a small hut. My job was to signal the power station to lift blocks of marble to the loading area.

the derrick boom lowered the grappling hook and chain to lift massive blocks to a loading place. A rope line from my hut stretched to the power station down the hill. My job was to signal the power station by yanking the rope. One yank meant "Lift", two meant "Stop" and three meant "Lower".

One never-to-be-forgotten day I watched a beautiful white marble weighing "hundreds of tons" rise toward the surface. The powerhouse machinery groaned under its tremendous weight, but it lifted slowly to the loading level. Time for my "Stop" signal, but to my horror, the rope snapped, and no signal got through. With the block rising steadily toward the boom-wheel, and scarcely a split second to spare, I raced across the rough ground faster than my legs could go, yelling frantically, "Stop! Stop!" with all my lung capacity. My voice probably didn't carry but the operator saw my panic-stricken face and stopped just as the huge block touched the boom wheel. In another instant the machinery would have smashed, dropping the mighty block down among the workers below — including my father. For this morning's work, John Patch, our foreman, recommended an increase in my pay.

Now I was growing up stronger, more self-confident, with a better command of English. At school's end I looked forward to summer jobs that would help the exchequer. The quarry job taught me a lot. My associates, a cosmopolitan crew, were inured to long hours of work for small return, a 12-hour day, six days a week. For the next two summers, I was water-boy on the railway line which the company was extending to their newly-developed marble center in Florence. This was a back-breaking matter of hauling two big buckets of water to the thirsty workers, not too bad when the source was near, but the distance kept increasing between springs, and the hauls seemed ever longer. Meanwhile my father, an experienced machinery man, operated a drill on the quarry floor, got one dollar a day and unavoidably took a beating from flying chips thrown up by the machine, from which there was no protection. He lost one eye, and injured the other, eventually becoming almost blind.

Because of Father's failing sight, he was transferred to the company mills in town, where vision was less important. So we moved from the congenial rural setting of Shangraw into what seemed to us the great metropolis of Proctor. We were assigned to an old farm house on the edge of town, near a marvellous private fish pond called Beaver Pond. It had been the very comfortable ten-room house of some prosperous farmer, but now was bounded by two company railroads, and had a monstrous stockpile of marble in the yard itself. The ancient house was shaded by great elms, so dense one could scarcely see through their shadows. Here we lived most comfortably but, alas, only for a brief period. However, the change had brought us to town, and taken us older children into the huge building which contained the high school (the only one for miles around) and the upper grades of the grammar school which some of us were attending.

The transition from rural to urban Proctor was the best thing that could happen to an immigrant family such as ours. From our background in the outskirts of Helsinki, it had been an easy change to the rural outskirts of Proctor. There were no traumatic effects from a European to an American way of life, for it was still deep country living. But now we had progressed into a relatively cosmopolitan setting, close to everything, school, a well-stocked library, and an undenominational church, high on a hill.

Our home became a gathering place for Finns in the neighborhood. Here Father held forth with the older Finnish immigrants and expounded his philosophy, based on experience in two worlds. He saw in freedom, in a democratic form of government, the embodiment of his own ideas. Fifty years ahead of his time, he never foisted his opinions on anybody, but put them on the table for those who wanted to hear. To his small groups, assembled over a gallon of hard cider, he would propound such then-unheard-of principles as old age pensions, workmen's compensation, radical ideas in that locality. He recognized the value of human life, and the necessity for some solution between the haves and have-nots. Naturally, he became suspect among our authoritarian higher-ups, and, had it not been for a promising brood of children, increasingly giving a good account of themselves, he might have been run out of town as a Socialist, the most odious term possible in those days.

He was never a heavy drinker, and only took hard liquor when I brought home a bottle of good whiskey to enjoy with him. He always had drinks on hand for his friends but at a given point he would say "Excuse me now, but you go on as you like." Often we had to help a neighbor to his home. But he had an amazing capacity for home brew. Mother made an amber-colored Finnish concoction, "Kallia", of molasses, hops and water, and there was always a gallon jugful fermenting behind the stove and another cooling in the cellar. Most days, coming home from work, he would go straight to the big glass jug and consume enormous quantities, sometimes almost emptying it, especially after a hot day. This was the extent of his drinking, and Mother indulged him in his precious moments of relaxation, and kept the jug filled. I never knew anyone who could amuse himself so easily and pleasantly, given the chance. He got a guitar from somewhere, taught himself, and strummed it by the hour, singing Finnish or English songs. He didn't need an audience, played for his own amusement and thoroughly enjoyed it. On Sunday afternoons the whole family would join him to sing hymns together.

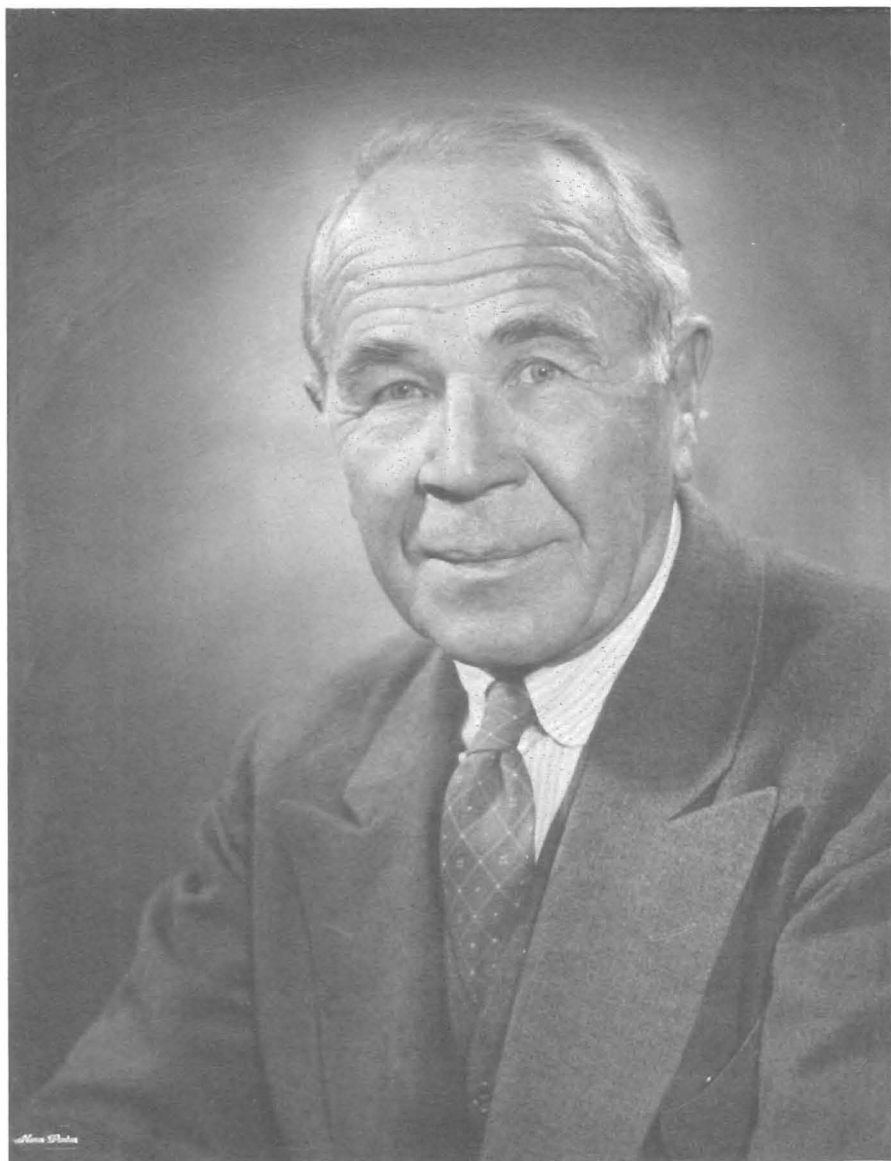
the various company departments, the machine shop, the main office, hand-
Growing Up: A Teen-ager

At 13, I graduated from grammar school, and had to get on the company payroll. I wept bitterly at leaving school, and promised myself to return some day, but the need of the family could not be denied. As oldest son, I had no choice but to find a job and bring in money on Saturday night. By now, several of us were contributing, the girls doing housework, the boys running errands or working as pin-boys in the local club. As a family we fared better than ever before. For the first time we were getting by reasonably well despite the fact that Father had to take a lesser job because of failing eyesight. My school chums were distributed in finishing of marble, polishing, tracing, etc. But the best paying trade was that of marble cutting, where pay was to me fabulous, and I needed to earn as much and as soon as humanly possible.

I never knew why the Monumental Department took a Finnish boy into that almost-solidly Italian section, unless because I was in such dead earnest. I was employed as an apprentice, and spent most of my first year running errands for the skilled piece-workers, mostly drawn from Italy's best sculptors. I ran for



Schoolhouse where Wayne Sarcka completed eighth grade in 1903.



Vaino Albinus Saarinen who became Wayne Anthony Sarcka when he came to the United States



Elizabeth Man Sarcia

snuff for the Scandinavians, stogies for the Italians, sweets for the Yankees. It was a hectic year, each day begun by tending furnace in the superintendent's home. In spare hours, few indeed, I began to chip away with borrowed tools on a waste block of marble. The most popular item for cemetery headstones was a "Lamb of God" showing a lamb lying in peace. With no instruction, but with plenty to copy from, I produced a sufficiently convincing lamb, which impressed my shop foreman. From then on I was given headstones to carve, with more complicated designs each year, until after several apprentice years, I had arrived as a journeyman carver, able to do any and all gravestone designs. This was a fabulous economic gain in our household, for I averaged the enormous sum of \$30 a week, equivalent to \$100 not long after.

Our entire family had progressed marvelously. Earle was employed by the company, the older girls were sought after as houseworkers in the aristocratic families in town. Together we had achieved an impressive gain over our Shangraw existence. We were "in", with access to the library, the churches, all the intellectual influences of our town.

About this time, two major influences came into my life. First, I learned to box. Our house being large enough for a boarder, we took in a delightful young husky, several years older than I, who wanted to learn to fight. I bought boxing gloves and with the aid of a book, *The Manly Art of Fisticuffs*, Tony and I spent endless hours learning to box scientifically. We had a big old woodhouse with a dirt floor, and this we smoothed over to make for good footwork. Here we hammered away at each other, taking turns in carrying away black eyes and bruised faces. I learned to clutch when in danger, to guard against my stronger opponent's haymakers, to counter, to back away and jab so as not to be knocked down too often. These bouts stood me in good stead later in my pursuit of higher education.

Second, a Hungarian nobleman, with vast experience on the stone buildings of Europe, was brought in as a company designer, and came like a meteor into my life. He was a strange, lonely person. Soon after his arrival, he built for himself a commodious mud-and-thatch house only a stone's throw from our home, and became one of my early heroes and my good friend. He was an ardent fencer, and longed for competition with the foils. An eager, willing pupil, I became at first his target, but fairly soon was able to provide him with a modicum of competition in his favorite sport. This became for me a major, though expensive, sport which has lasted the rest of my life. I actually lugged a pair of foils throughout India and into Mesopotamia years later, hoping to find fun in my chosen game.

But far more important was his library, a fascinating collection of unusual volumes on many subjects. Nobody else was interested, and I alone had access to this treasure-house. It became my personal reading room. I was enthralled by the great archeologists, Layard, Koldewey, etc., and especially by the explorations in Mesopotamia which had begun to uncover the earliest civilized records. Up to then, the Bible stories were all that was known of ancient times in the Middle East, but these new findings far antedated the Old Testament writings and threw light on the ancient world which flourished up and down the Tigris and Euphrates, on Babylon and Assyria, and even on Ur of the Chaldees, which Abraham and his Father Torah left as a highly civilized community, to seek in the wilderness their Promised Land. This study started a trend in my life, which I have pursued ever since, and even made me dream of a career as archeologist.

In my second year of apprenticeship, I developed a bad chest pain. No wonder, for with the introduction of pneumatic cutting tools, our big workroom was thick with marble dust, so that toward evening, or on any dark day, we could scarcely see the electric bulbs three feet overhead, even with windows wide open. I was finally sent to Dr. Hack, the company physician, who called it a mild silicosis, and recommended some months in the fresh air. Seeing my expression that I had no place to go, he generously suggested his father's farm in Orwell, near Lake Champlain, which his brother-in-law was operating as a fairly modern dairy farm. It was haying-time, when farmers needed help to fill their barns and ricks, and he felt sure I would be welcome. I accepted with alacrity, and said I was not farm-trained but would do my best. He replied, "Your best is a relative thing. The job calls for complete satisfaction to your employers or nothing." I have always remembered this wise comment.

Next day I was met at the Orwell railway station by strapping, smiling Charlie Allen. It was a pleasant reception and I never lost my affection for the five members of the doctor's family. I was a willing 14-year old and pitched in everywhere to make myself valuable. I enjoyed the country living, all phases of the work, and especially old Mr. and Mrs. Hack, and my immediate boss, Charles Allen, a descendant of General Ethan Allen. My pay was one dollar a day with total keep. Work was hard and hours long, but on Saturday night I could walk alone to the General Store in Leicester Junction and buy a five cent cigar as compensation for blistered hands, painful sunburn and lame back. Smoking that highly-prized and well-earned stogie, I was the big shot of the three-mile walk back to the farm. I must have inherited a strong stomach for the cigar was powerful. I lived here pleasantly, though missing young companionship, for three months. The chest pain disappeared, and I went home burnt brown, stronger and heavier, so that my family saw a great change in their now nearly grown-up son.

During my absence, the younger children had come to know and appreciate our father, his indomitable courage, his vivid imagination, his humanitarian philosophy. He was utterly fearless, yet thoroughly self-controlled. A stint in the Russian Army, required of all Finns, had instilled discipline in his personal habits. If angered, he would tackle three men as readily as one, with utter self-abandon. Each of us can tell stories of his courage. One of my memories is of a summer day when he proposed a picnic at a little known, waterfilled quarry several miles away, one of the company's earliest, and long since abandoned. We built a fire at the lower edge and all enjoyed our family outing. Father said casually, "I'd like to see how deep this quarry is." The surface was entirely clear. A high embankment commanded the opposite rim. While we lolled about, drowsy after our hearty lunch, we were suddenly aware of Father at the ledge's pinnacle 100 feet or so above the water. The sight of him, in drawers only, frightened us. Then he jumped hitting the water with a tremendous splash, and disappeared. It seemed fool-hardy, for nobody knew what lay beneath. We held our breath, almost counting the seconds until he would reappear — if ever. When the normal time for human submersion was long past, we became frantic, and sensed, grief-stricken, that he must have been entrapped by something below. Then suddenly, to our unspeakable relief, he rose to the surface, blowing mightily. It was a dare-devil example of the extreme courage that characterized his entire life.

By now several of the children were contributing to the family exchequer and behaving admirably. We had earned the respect not only of our fellow-countrymen but of the Town Fathers. But while the family was generally accepted, Father was obviously a maverick. Max Eastman's lines might have been written for him — "I ask no thing of God nor King, but to clear away his shadow." Some of his giant stature we children inherited, together with the finer stuff of my mother. Mother was the fly-wheel of the family. Her faith and her life were based on Lutheran teaching, and she lived it literally, including unlimited sacrifice of herself for the children whom she had borne and for whom she was ready to give her life. Her Bible was her daily companion and guide. Her husband's religious needs developed beyond the close confines of any denomination. With her steadfast loyalty to her own upbringing, anybody who lived outside Lutheranism was a queer nut, yet she accepted his strange spiritual negations and only admired his strength, courage and unusual ability to adjust to changes. She took him as he was and could be. The miracle was that they were basically complementary.

Mother was always surprising us with the diversity of her skills and interests. One winter, in the early days of skiing, our Athletic Club joined with other towns in a skiing carnival. A special women's event was a mile-long race over an oval course through unbroken snow. Many Swedish women in town had had skiing experience in their homeland and welcomed the contest for female skiing supremacy. Little Mother, her seven children gathered around, electrified us all. We had never seen her ski, but she quietly slipped into my superb Finnish skis, with only a strap for a toe-hold, started off at the whistle and outdistanced all competitors by nearly half a lap! Later she explained that it was standard practice for Finnish girls to ski 20 miles to a dance, dance all night and ski home for breakfast.

Those skis had been brought to me from Finland by Waldemar Sirjane, a young giant and an Adonis, who later became by sister Ellen's husband. Nine feet long, honest-to-God cross-country skis, they were light as a feather. No one in town had ever seen such beauties. It was my first experience of real skis. Several of us would start on a Sunday morning for a cross-country run to a neighboring town, and my skis were so fast I would reach our destination half-an-hour ahead.

I was in my teens, and early girl-stage, when one of my former classmates, a Swedish girl, had a summer visitor from New Hampshire. Both girls were eager for sociability, and they invited me and another Finnish boy for a day of picnic at Lake Dunmore, all of nineteen miles away. We four 16-year-olds went by train to Brandon, and by livery to a hotel on the lake where canoes could be rented by the hour. We paddled across to an isolated spot for a delicious lunch prepared by the girls, and a good swim.

While in the water, I noticed an increasing wind, and a gathering dark overhead, and urged that we start back to the boat-house, visible across the lake, about a mile away. As we paddled, the wind strengthened alarmingly. We did not know how rapidly storms could brew over these mountain lakes. I was paddling with all my might in the bow. Peter in the stern tried desperately to steer us head-on through the mountainous waves. Suddenly, whitecaps were breaking into my face, and we capsized. My split-second impression was of a body close by in the foaming waters. I plunged after it, clutched it and somehow managed to drag it to the gunwale of the overturned canoe, by now some distance away. We gasped as waves broke over our heads, but somehow clung fast. Rescue came just in time. A motor-boat enthusiast vacationing on the lake a mile or so away marked the sudden squall, a phenomenon entirely familiar to him, saw our struggles, shot his boat across to us, and pulled us in, the New Hampshire girl and me. Peter and his girl had disappeared. He had tried to save her, but was grabbed in a death-grip he could not break. They were found clutched together. This was my first and most vivid experience with death, and I lived it over for years to come, the earliest tragedy of my young life.

Our home was now within a short distance of a lovely grey stone church with a very fine minister, Mr. Raymond. We all attended Sunday School, from the top class down through. My teacher was a lantern-jawed man, the company lawyer. While he doubtless knew the scriptures, and could argue anybody down, he was not a pleasing personality to me, and I took exception to his presentation, if not his subject matter, which was rigidly fundamentalist and not related to the findings of archeology. I gradually faded from the picture, and felt that Sunday School for me was a complete loss of time.

One of the most exciting events of those early teen-age years was the annual arrival of a carload of semi-broken western horses, magnificent, Clydesdale-Percherons, huge animals, each weighing about a ton. A few of the wildest took several husky men to get them from the car to terra firma. Occasionally a really bad one would lug three men around the yard before he could be subdued. Splendid young things, they were destined to haul huge marble blocks around the yards into the various mills.

Again we moved. The marble stockpile had crept ever nearer our doorstep, till the house became marked for demolition. This time we found ourselves in the center of town, only a stone's throw from the creamery, the general store and the high school which towered over us. Here marvellous happenings took place for the Sarekas, who now, as a family, were getting along well.

Our two-family house stood against sharply rising ground leading up to the big high school. It so happened that in our own yard was a slanting rock ledge, with the right tilt so that a ball thrown against it would bounce back. Earle was a natural left-hander, and saw in this an unusual opportunity to develop his arm. Against this slab he threw day in and day out for hours without tiring. He acquired a rare and wicked curve, and a jump ball. Then he was the obvious pitcher for the high school team, and soon became a star. Few batters could hit his special curves, shoots and drops. He was a sensation, though still just a kid. He was asked to pitch for the town team, composed of star college athletes selected by the company to represent Proctor in all forms of competition. He was travelling in the fastest possible company, far beyond his years or experience.

Among the teams that came to play our town team was a professional colored ball club, the "Cuban Giants". Little Earle was to pitch against one of the most famous of the travelling clubs. His twisters and jump-balls amazed the visiting batters, who couldn't figure them out. The manager called him "the most difficult pitcher we have met all season". That established him as a pitcher with a limitless future, and he continued to prove himself in later schools and straight through his years at West Point. I have known baseball since I could read, and early heard about the great Honus LeJoy who learned to play ball in the same way. He was a Montreal factory kid, who in spare time threw a ball endlessly against the high side of the factory, which everybody thought utterly silly. When asked what he was doing, he said, "Learning to play ball". He became Cleveland's second baseman, and made the baseball Hall of Fame.

The Y.M.C.A., a great grey stone structure, was the center of life for us, the hangout of all the young bucks in town, with gym, bowling alleys, pool tables and a very popular reading room with books and periodicals. Here I spent most evening hours, taking courses and listening to lectures. It was my daily habit to spend part of lunch-hour in the reading room. One day, soon after turning 18, with my trade well in hand, and my earnings good, I noticed on the bulletin board a handbill which seemed to be written for me. It announced a competition for lads of high school age, two of whom would be chosen to manage jointly a street boys' evening club in Stamford, Connecticut. In exchange for working from 7-10 p.m., they would receive one dollar per day, sleeping quarters, and free tuition in either high school or a private school called King's.

This was my chance to break from Proctor, as I had longed to do ever since leaving school. I snatched the handbill, and rushed almost speechless to my good friend, Dick Mahaffy, the secretary. Quivering with excitement, I stammered, "This is what I want. How can I get it?" Sympathetically, but not hopefully, he said, "I'll do my best for you, Wayne." He helped me assemble the required dossier, testimonials from Dr. Abbot, the principal, Pastor Raymond, my employer and various friends, along with my school record, photograph, my physical dimensions, interests, etc., all of which went to Dr. Betts, Chairman of the Governing Board of the City Boys' Club of Stamford.

The next weeks were the longest of my life, as I waited, telling nobody, but full of trepidation, to hear the outcome. At last the letter came. Out of 500 applicants, I had been selected, along with Tom Evans of Canandaigua, New York. Perspiring and stammering with excitement, I went to my shop foreman and announced my good fortune. He looked at me sadly and shook his head. I broke the news to my family, who were torn between grief and joy. Next day, my superintendent came to my bench and said, "Wayne, you are a foolish fellow! Here you have a trade, a good living, all you want and you are throwing it up for a gamble." I replied, "Mr. Higby, I have never wanted to be a sculptor, have never wanted to spend my life in Proctor, have always dreamed of going out into the world to learn more about myself and other people and places. I am sorry but this is what I want. I'm taking it."

Proctor people had no encouragement for me. For some time I had been a problem child in town. My athletic ability was unquestioned. My earning capacity had been proved. I was the envy of my friends, and the most eligible bachelor in Proctor, although too young to be taken seriously. But my dislocation of church relations and my proclivities for sinning had been observed. I had been known to go to an attractive Rutland bar for a stein of imported Pilsener, to drive to Rutland for an occasional minstrel. I was the first local boy to smoke cigarettes in public. Teachers, preachers and town fathers saw me started on the skid-row to Hell, and now I was giving up a promising career in marble cutting for some tempting call to far-away Connecticut. They assured me that nobody, but nobody, had ever gone out of Proctor and made good elsewhere.

The town of Proctor, like many centers of embryo industry in that era, was a company monopoly, where the development of the company was a desperately serious business. Nobody had time to laugh, and everybody, in places of responsibility, was driven by the need to expand. The genius of the town was Redfield Proctor, who had come from Proctorsville, to take a job in the little Sutherland Marble Company. He became owner of the company, and in one life-time, begin-

ning with a tiny enterprise, he carved out from the adjacent towns the new Town of Proctor, named after him, and built up the largest marble company in the world. A man of tremendous capacity and vision, who learned the law in his spare moments, he was sent to Washington as senator for many terms, eventually became recognized as Dean of the Senate, and used his inside know-how to secure contracts of gigantic proportion for the company, supplying marble for most of the great buildings in Washington. It was a tremendous achievement. But marble never spoke to me. I was no Michelangelo. I dropped my tools on my bench and left, never bothering to pick them up.

My local references and my well-wishers all gave me high praise, including considerable comment on my athletic prowess, far beyond my deserts. Friends bade me good-bye privately. Only one, an Italian sculptor, dared defy public small-town opinion and came to the station, along with my family, to see me off. I bade good-bye to my chum, kissed my family and boarded the train into the unknown.

Leaving Home

For the first time I was leaving my family, but this gave me no qualms. They were in a relatively secure position, with all the teen-age boys and girls working at odd jobs and bringing in considerable revenue. My father was working part-time. We had emerged from the trough of hunger and deprivation. They were living comfortably, showing no visible scars from the difficult years. The children were a sturdy lot, bursting with personal ambition, but dedicated to supplying the common needs of the brood. We were "God-damn foreigners" no longer, but fully accepted according to local standards. Arriving as complete strangers, with foreign ways, knowing no English, in a decade or so we had become an outstanding unit in the community. We had even shown superior qualities as compared with many others, both Yankee and foreign. To be sure, Father was criticized for his "radical" views, but the rest of the family were well-behaved and more than reasonably adjusted. We were conspicuous for our harmonious liv-



Monument Department of the Vermont Marble Company where Wayne Sarcia worked as a teen-ager.

ing together and our unusual individual drives for self-advancement. We were not a demonstrative family, but each had a healthy respect for the others and for our individual differences. Some were poised and easy-going like Mother, others had more of Father's aggressive qualities, bold in self-expression, completely honest. No two were alike.

As for me, I had made the grade, had set a good example to my siblings, and had honestly at the age of 19, earned freedom from further family support. Both my shop foreman and my superintendent, desperately trying to be helpful, had said, "Well, Wayne, if things go wrong, you always have your bench here to come back to." This gave me a great sense of security, but I alone knew that I was leaving for good. I had apparently not only done my best, but succeeded fully, a comforting thought which stayed with me during the tough first year of experiment. This was my big day for which I had long yearned. I felt passing rich with \$25 safely in my pocket.

Here ends the Horatio Alger part of this narrative, for the Sarcka family Hegira had begun.

This is the first part of an informal autobiography which Wayne A. Sarcka, the founder of Spring Lake Ranch in Shrewsbury, Vermont, completed by December, 1966, as a Christmas gift to his daughter, Anne. He was 76 years old at the time and in deteriorating health.

He says in the dedication of the manuscript:

....My only collaborator is your wonderful Mother....Together we hope this sketch of your old Father's life will bring some small pleasure to you and yours. If so, then it will be the finest Christmas of my life....

Elizabeth Man Sarcka was a true partner throughout her marriage to Wayne Sarcka. They were both doing social work in the Greater New York area when they met in the late 1920s. Both were involved with Girl Scouts. Elizabeth established the first Girl Scout troop in the Richmond Hill section of Queens and was a member of the first Queens Council of Girl Scouts. Wayne was helping to direct charitable drives, including raising money for the Girl Scouts. The couple was married in 1928 and spent their honeymoon hiking the Long Trail section of the Appalachian Trail in Vermont.

They completely lost their hearts to the area and bought a piece of land with the idea of having a summer place. There was a lot of work to do to make the place habitable and the Sarckas found a way. They gathered boys from a settlement house and the YMCA to work each morning. The afternoons were for play. The impromptu work-play camp lasted three years.

During the third summer a distinguished New York psychiatrist saw amazing leadership growth occurring for his own son and progress being made by a patient of his. Both boys were attending the camp. The doctor urged the Sarckas to pioneer the first half-way house for the mentally ill in the United States.

They started with two patients. It was a struggle but it worked. Spring Lake Ranch recently celebrated its 50th anniversary and is still going strong.

Elizabeth and Wayne Sarcka ran Spring Lake Ranch for 30 years before entrusting it to others in 1960. Wayne Sarcka died in 1968. His widow lives in Queens, remaining active in disarmament and world peace campaigns.

Credits: Cover picture, Ann Sarcka; Wayne and Elizabeth Sarcka, Spring Lake Ranch ; pictures on p. 5, 7, 14, Proctor Free Library

Addendum material: Courtesy of The Christian Science Monitor, September 25, 1984

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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The Rutland Historical Society was founded in 1969 to preserve, study and disseminate the history of the original Town of Rutland as chartered by New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth in 1761, now comprised of the City of Rutland (1892) and the Towns of Rutland (1761), Proctor (1886) and West Rutland (1886). The Society maintains and operates The Rutland Museum in the historic Bank of Rutland building built in 1825, now owned by the City of Rutland, and The Vermont Farm and Rural Life Museum at the Vermont State Fair. A research library and the historical collections are maintained in the Museums and the historic Nickwackett Fire Station. Gifts or bequests of articles of historical interest or money are welcome at all times and are deductible for income tax purposes.

The Society publishes the Rutland Historical Society Quarterly for the members and presents public historical programs throughout the year at the Rutland Free Library in the Nella Grimm Fox Room. The Annual Meeting of the Society is held on the third Wednesday of October.

Membership in the Society is open to all upon payment of dues to the Treasurer, Rutland Historical Society, 62 Ormsbee Avenue, Proctor, Vermont 05765. Membership entitles each member to a subscription to the Quarterly, a copy of the Annual Report, the right to vote at business meetings and the benefits of supporting the Museums, monthly programs, library and collections. Dues are \$5.00 a year for regular members; for those wishing to give the Society further support a contributing membership is \$15.00; a sponsor membership is \$25.00; a sustaining membership is \$100.00 (minimum); and, with a single payment in each case, life membership \$125.00 or memorial membership \$150.00. Members wishing to pay two or more years' dues in advance are encouraged to do so to reduce costs. The expiration date of each membership is listed on the mailing label of the publication. Please send change of address on Postal Service Form 3576 (a postcard available free of charge at your local post office).

Manuscripts are invited; address correspondence to the Editor.

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